

Habitat restoration in Maine

Gulf of Maine Coastal Ecosystems Program

Since colonial times, Maine's natural environment has been subject to serious abuse. Increasingly, individuals and groups are becoming interested in restoring habitat where ecological, recreational and economic values have been lost. Maine's rivers, for example, are burdened with excessive sedimentation, loss of riparian vegetation and thousands of dams -- which can present serious impediments for migratory fish, recreational users and nearby residents. Coastal island nesting birds may be threatened by disturbances associated with second home developments, timber harvesting, recreational use, aquaculture and predation. Similarly, Maine's coastal marshes have been degraded by drainage ditches, road crossings and undersized culverts, and the introduction of invasive non-native plants. Gulf of Maine Program is committed to working in voluntary partnerships with all interested stakeholders, to restore rivers, nesting islands and coastal marshes for migratory fish, birds, endangered species -- and for us.

Already, Gulf of Maine Program, with technical and financial support from many conservation partners, has played a role in:

- restoring fish habitat by controlling erosion, repairing/installing fish ladders or removing unneeded dams.
- restoring coastal nesting island habitat for nesting seabirds.
- restoring coastal wetlands for waterbirds and migratory fish by plugging ditches, constructing pannes (small ponds on salt marshes that attract wildlife), installing appropriately-sized culverts, controlling invasive plants and preventing non-point source pollution.

In 1999, with financial support from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Fish Passage Funds and the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation's Maine Habitat Restoration Partnership grant, and with the participation of many partners, Gulf of Maine Program is:

- helping establish the Maine Field Office Director of American Rivers, a national conservation organization, to facilitate communications and catalyze river restoration initiatives statewide.
- coordinating with private contractors to identify, prioritize, plan, implement and monitor salt marsh and river restoration work.
- removing five dams in order to restore migratory fish passage.
- conducting riparian restoration work at two sites.
- installing fish passage at one dam.
- restoring two large salt marshes.
- supporting research needed to document shad passage problems at the Brunswick Dam fishway on the Androscoggin River.
- supporting engineering work needed at two dam sites to move two river restoration projects forward.
- coordinating with others to purchase salt marsh restoration equipment that will enhance efficiency of future restoration work.

For further information, please contact:

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With grants renewed in 2000, additional restoration projects are being planned. All of these successes depend on funding and technical support from U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, Natural Resources Conservation Service, National Marine Fisheries Service, Maine Dept. of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife, Maine Dept. of Marine Resources, American Rivers, Atlantic Salmon Federation -- Maine Council, Ducks Unlimited, Inc. S.W.A.M.P. Inc., Natural Resource Council of Maine's Maine Rivers Program, Conservation Law Foundation, Trout Unlimited and other locally based groups. Partnerships remain vital as we continue to build our collective capacity and work towards achieving our habitat restoration goals.